LIS 525

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Curriculum/Collaboration Introductory Essay

When teachers and school library media specialists collaborate, student learning is enhanced through the integration of information literacy skills and curricular content. Collaborative lesson planning allows teachers and librarians to combine their skill sets and their resources in developing authentic learning experiences that actively engage students in creating knowledge. Good collaboration fosters critical thinking and spurs interest in the learning process. Many students fail to see the connection between the content they are learning in school and the real world application of that knowledge. Well planned collaboration creates learning experiences that uncover the connections between information being taught and the practical use of that information. Students given the opportunity to steer their own learning through research will be more likely to effectively gain and retain knowledge. In other words, two heads with two instructional specialties should be able to come up with meaningful and interesting lessons that students enjoy.

The first artifact in my portfolio is a video that shows me teaching a lesson to grade three students at Dodge Elementary School during my practicum there. The lesson was one of four in a unit that taught basic research skills of multiple sources that ultimately prepared students for a subsequent science research project on rainforest animals. This was a big unit that was made possible, in part, because the LMC runs a fixed schedule with forty minutes for instruction. Each lesson focused on strategies for locating, extracting, and citing information from one of four sources: print books, print encyclopedias, electronic encyclopedias, and websites. The media specialist taught all four research lessons and students practiced their research skills by filling out graphic organizers and citations sheets contained within their research folders. At the end of the unit, students received a folder identical to the one they used during research instruction in order to complete actual research for their science project. While the research for the science project took place in the library media center, it was largely driven by the classroom teacher and the students with the librarian acting in a minor support role. Through the collaboration of the classroom teacher and the media specialist, this unit on rainforest animals provided the students with critical information literacy skills needed to steer their own learning. The students thoroughly enjoyed the project and created clear, concise reports that documented their understanding of the curricular content and the information literacy skills acquired.

The second artifact in my portfolio is a lesson plan that I developed for a thematic program assignment in LIS 534 Resources and Services for Children. I worked with grade five students at Windermere Boulevard Elementary School. I collaborated with the library media specialist and the school enrichment specialist who was acting as the ELA instructor for the advanced grade five students. Together, we decided that student written and performed video book talks would address the common core standards the ELA teacher wanted to address while using information literacy skills to promote student reading through peer reviews. The lesson addressed the common core learning standards of Speaking and Listening in the presentation of knowledge and ideas in a multimedia format. It also addressed the AASL learning standards through the use of technology to organize and display knowledge in ways that others can view, use, and assess. The students selected a book they had recently read and enjoyed about which to write and perform a video book talk. I met with the students for two forty minute periods, one for instruction and one for recording the talks. The students practiced their book talks at home in between our first and second meetings. The results were amazing and with some behind-the-scenes editing, they were flawless. The book talks appeared on the school’s morning TV announcements and were a big hit with the student body and the administration. We also added the files to the records in the Destiny catalog for those titles. The students really enjoyed performing their book talks and expressed interest in creating others in the future.

Both of these artifacts represent collaborative lessons that I would use in my own LMP. They were both hands-on learning experiences that allowed students to take an active role in creating and sharing knowledge. They were also big projects that could not have been done without the collaborative effort of classroom teachers and media specialists guiding the process.